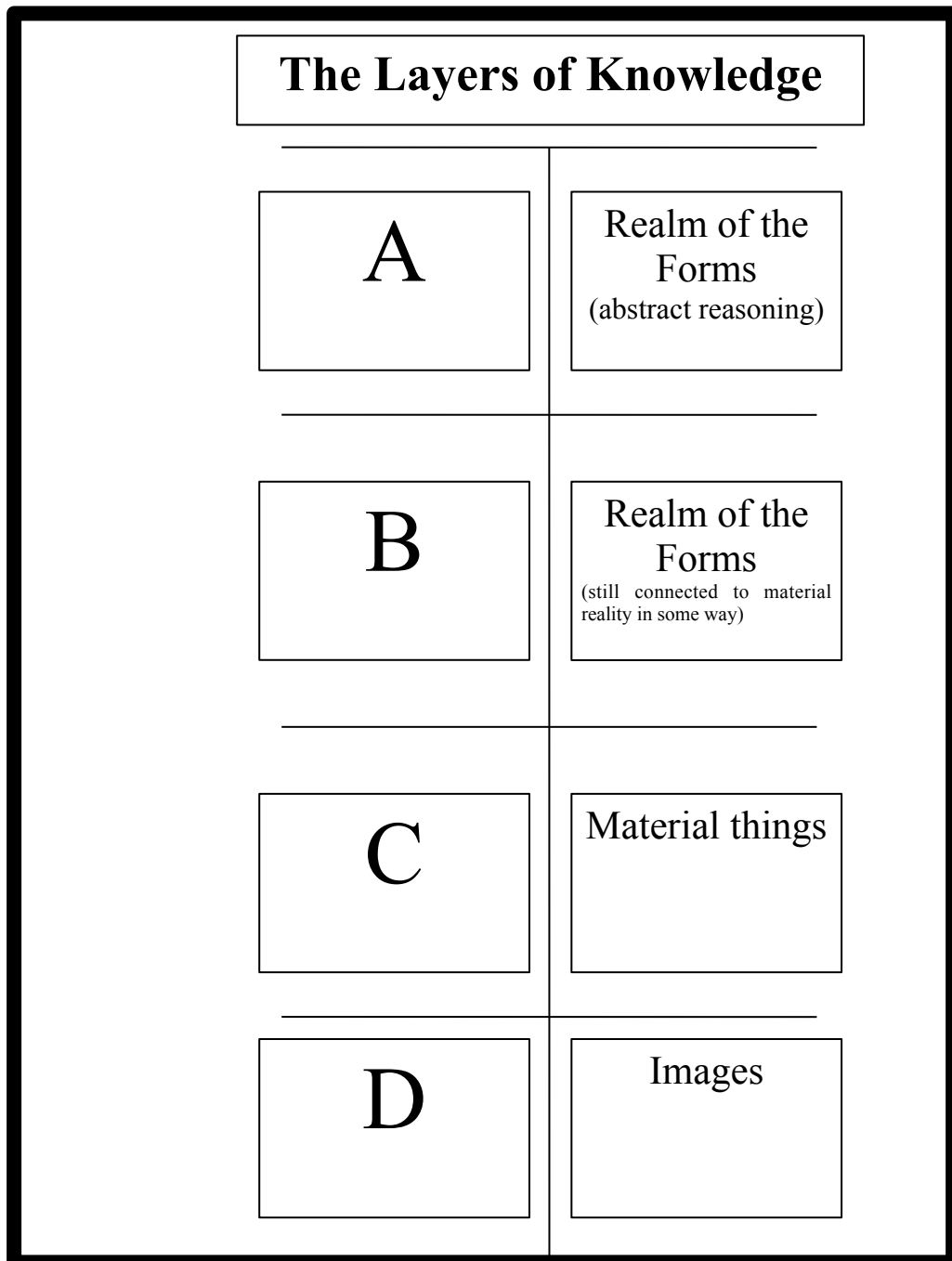


## Plato

Heraclitus (535–475 BC) “we never step into the same river twice”

Everything is in a state of flux or impermanence

Plato wanted to rescue knowledge from this impermanence. He wanted to find a permanent “home” for knowledge.



Levels A and B are comprehended through **reason**  
Levels C and D are comprehended through **the senses**

The highest form is that of the good, but forms of beauty, justice also exist in level A

In Level B are the forms (or ideas) of material objects

All objects in the material world are imperfect copies of the perfect forms

Problems that the realm of the forms solve

1. Why do we get some things and not others? E.g. not a crocophant? (there is a form of a crocodile and of an elephant, but not of a crocophant)
2. How can we say that some things are beautiful, good, just etc? (these things resemble in some way the forms of beauty, the good, justice)
3. Knowledge remains permanent despite the fact of impermanence in the material world.

Strange idea: Learning as Remembering

Our souls were in the realm of the forms before we were born. They were exposed to perfect knowledge here, but this was forgotten when we were born.

When we “learn” in school and throughout life we are simply remembering what we already knew. (A good teacher is one who manages to prompt our memories well)

## Criticisms of realm of the forms

1. Do we all have access to the same realm of forms? In other words, how universal is reason?

2. If the form of an apple takes up no space (it is not material, it is an idea) then how can an apple in the material world be a “copy” of it?

3. Third man argument

a) The identity of an object is found by looking to the realm of the forms. E.g. Barack Obama is a man because he resembles the form of a man. This means that Barack Obama and the form “Man” are similar in some way.

b) However, in order for us to be able to say that Barack Obama and the form “Man” are similar, we must say that they resemble another form at a higher level, the super form of “Man”.

c) But in order for us to be able to say that the super form of “Man” and the form of “Man” and Barack Obama are similar, we must say that they all resemble yet another form at a higher level, the super duper form of man.

d) And in order for us to be able to say that the super duper form of “Man”, the super form of “Man”, the form of “Man” and Barack Obama are all similar, we need to create yet another form at a higher level. This process must continue and so we have an infinite regression.